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5105 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, California 90042
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Published in the United States of America by Builders of the Adytum and simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada by Ridout and Maybe, Toronto 1, Canada.

New and Revised Edition

Printed in the United States of America

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TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 27

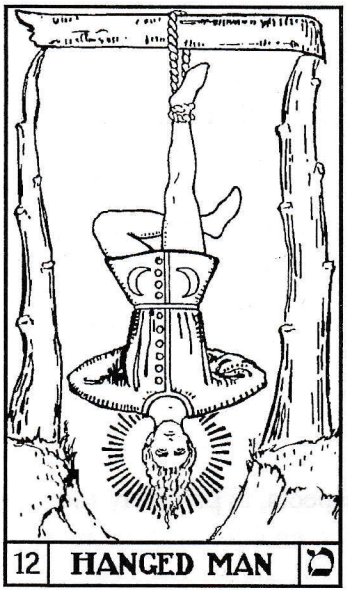


BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Twenty-seven

REVERSAL



The symbolism of Key 12 is as obviously related to the Law of Reversal as is that of Key 11 to the Law of Equilibrium. The application of this law finds expression in the mental attitude of the truly wise, which is the exact reverse of popular opinion. That on which the wise set high value is accounted as nothing in the estimation of the average man. This is one reason the first Tarot picture is named the Fool and numbered Zero.

The series of Tarot Keys is intended to effect a reversal of the superficial, deluded interpretation of the universe which holds the ordinary human being in bondage. Hence Key 12 is a symbol of the state of absolute freedom, as experienced by the wise; but this state is indicated by a combination of symbols which looks like a picture of suffering and bondage.

The Hebrew letter מ, Mem, printed on this Key, means **waters**, or **seas**, and this letter-name is also the generic Hebrew noun corresponding to our word **water**. It refers, likewise, to the metaphysical substance which is called "water" in various texts of occultism.

Water symbolizes the Law of Reversal because water reflects everything upside down. More than this, no one but a person who has experienced the reversal of consciousness pictured by Key 12 can understand what is really meant in occultism by the word "water". Others may approach the truth intellectually, but they only who actually have experienced reversal can fully comprehend the Water of the Wise, as alchemists call it.

In connection with the symbolism of the High Priestess, you learned to identify water with subconsciousness. You learned also that subconsciousness is actually the substance of every form in the universe—that it is the **One Thing** from which all things are made. Consequently, it will be easy to recognize the letter Mem as signifying the **Mother Deep**, or **Root of Nature**. This is carried out further in that this letter is one of the three Mother letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the two others being Aleph (א) and Shin (ש), These three letters represent three aspects of the Absolute, or the **All**.

The universal subconsciousness is also your personal subconsciousness. Its creative powers are those which you direct by means of suggestion, as explained in SEVEN STEPS.

One thing which makes all forms of mental and occult practice seem difficult is the supposition that what we have to do demands an exertion of some intangible mental power which must be pitted against the inertia of a very tangible physical reality. This "matter" surrounding us seems to be so dense, so resistant, so hard to move, that most persons regard as preposterous the notion that mere **thinking** can have any power over external conditions.

A wise man is not deceived by this surface appearance. He sees himself surrounded by things which have neither the solidity nor the inertia his unaided senses report. He understands that the densest forms of physical substance, as well as the lightest gases, are really **forms of energy** built up from infinitesimal, widely separate "drops" of the "water" of the alchemists.

Thus, when he begins to attack the practical problem of changing conditions by changing his thinking, he does not face the difficulty which besets one who believes what his senses report concerning the things in his environment. A practical occultist knows there is no difference between the energy which takes form as thought and the energy which takes form as a diamond, a piece of metal, or any other physical object. He knows, moreover, that thought forms are centers of more intense and more lasting activity than physical things.

Thus the occult teaching about water as substance, which, in many respects, is precisely the same as the scientific conception of the electrical constitution of matter, enables an aspirant to effect a total **reversal** in his interpretation of his environment. By means of this reversal he is able to free his mind from the subjection to appearances which prevents most persons from using mental imagery to change conditions for the better.

The number 12 is almost inexhaustible in its meanings. In this it is like the number 7 to which it is also related. 12 is the **product** of 3 and 4, and 7 is the sum of the same two numbers. In Tarot, therefore, Key 12 may be said to be a symbol of the multiplication of the power of the Emperor by the generative potency of the Empress.

You are familiar with 12 and 7 as representing, respectively, the number of zodiacal signs and the number of heavenly bodies known to ancient astronomers. 12 is associated with the idea of completeness, because twelve months and twelve signs of the zodiac round out a year.

Since 12 is composed of the digits 1 and 2, and since we read the digits in a composite number from right to left as we read the letters of a Hebrew word, 12 expresses the manifestation of 2 through the agency of 1. In Tarot, 2 is the High Priestess and 1 is the Magician. Hence this reading of 12 suggests an outpouring of the powers of subconsciousness through the fixation of the conscious mind's power of attention. Precisely this is what the Hanged Man typifies.

When concentration is prolonged, the effect produced is what Hindus call Samadhi. Outward effects of Samadhi include profound trance and the **suspension** of most of the bodily functions. The inner result is direct experience of superconsciousness. This is the union of personal consciousness with the universal, attained by practices which quiet the mind and suspend the formation of chains of associated ideas.

The title of the Key, the Hanged Man, refers to the result of such practices. Without changing its meaning, we might call it the **Suspended Man**.

"Man" is an English noun derived from a Sanskrit root, **manas**, meaning mind as the thinking principle. To the initiated, therefore, the title of Key 12 suggests the suspension of personal mental activity. This is achieved by concentration.

When this suspension of personal activity is effected, there is a release of those marvelous powers of subconsciousness which make themselves manifest in the "works of power" performed by adepts.

As a result of even momentary experience of the superconscious state, one's whole attitude toward life becomes the reverse of that of the average human being. He who has had this experience knows himself to be merely a vehicle, or instrument, of the cosmic Life-Breath. Gone forever is the delusion that personality is, or can be, separate from the sum-total of cosmic activity.

The words of Jesus, "Of myself I can do **nothing**", express the mental state reached by all who have this experience. Yet this is not in the least degree a confession of weakness. It is simply the recognition that there is no form of personal activity which is not also an expression of universal laws and forces. Instead of lessening the importance and value of personality, this consciousness tremendously enhances one's estimate of the worth of the personal vehicle. For it shows that personality, though it can do nothing of itself, is the indispensable agent whereby the powers of the One Life may be expressed in the conditions of relative existence.

The astrological correspondence to Key 12 is the planet Neptune. This planet was not discovered by exoteric astronomers until long after the Tarot Keys were invented, but its existence and nature were known to occultists. Hence they made a place for it in the Tarot series. One has only to know that astrologers call Neptune the planet of inversion to understand that it must be related to Key 12.

Neptune is said to rule inspiration, psychometry and mediumship. It is connected also with gases and drugs which produce unconsciousness and hallucinations. Some of these drugs and gases effect chemical alterations in the blood which make possible an imperfect perception of higher forms of consciousness.

Be on your guard here. You may have read of cases in which a narcotic drug or gas has opened, temporarily, a gateway into the higher consciousness. Never make any experiments of this kind. No intelligent occultist ever uses drugs for this purpose.

Though such chemical substances, when introduced into the blood, do stimulate the action of brain centers through which the higher modes of consciousness are experienced, the active principle in them which accomplishes this result cannot be separated by any process known to modern chemistry from certain other substances which are terribly destructive to the delicate tissues of nerves and brain.

Yet, the fact that narcotic drugs do enable one to experience a measure of superconsciousness points to an important conclusion. He who experiences the Divine Consciousness does so because of a **chemical** change in the composition of his blood. This change, however, must be effected from within the bodily organism, not by outside agencies.

Since the bodily processes are completely under the control of subconsciousness, it follows that the alteration of bodily states is also effected by subconsciousness. The necessary chemical changes in your organism are being brought about by the work you are doing in connection with this instruction.

When you look at these Tarot Keys, and carry out the directions given in these pages, you give subconsciousness patterns on which to work. Subconsciousness brings about the required modifications in your body chemistry in a perfectly normal and safe way. Ultimately, you will, as a result of these changes in chemistry and nerve structure, experience the kind of consciousness pictured by Key 12!

In many respects, this is one of the most important Keys of Tarot. As you color it this week, and during your regular periods of study, be sure to make note of any impressions you may receive.

Do not forget that many highly advanced human beings are at all times using Tarot as a focus for their meditations. Because they are illuminated men and women, they are like high-powered broadcasting stations. When you work attentively and receptively with Tarot, you are likely to pick up some of the ideas sent forth by these illuminated members of the Inner School.

Soon you will learn to distinguish these thoughts from the ideas developed through the working of the deductive process in your own field of subconsciousness. You may even receive a clear impression as to the personal source whence these flashes of illumination come to you. Always have pencil and paper at hand when you work with the Tarot Keys. Then you will be ready to record anything you may get in this way.

COLORING INSTRUCTIONS

KEY 12. THE HANGED MAN

Yellow:	Slippers, halo round head.
Blue:	Coat (not crescents, buttons, belt, or stripe down front and round neck), same as canopy in Key 7.
Green:	Grass
Brown:	Scaffold, hill slopes at base of trees.
Gray:	Background.
Silver:	Crescents, belt, buttons and front stripe.
White:	Man's hair, and rope by which he is suspended.
Red:	Hose.